An increasing number of older adults are keeping their natural teeth longer than ever before thanks to a focus on prevention, advances in dentistry, and access to optimally fluoridated drinking water. Still, access to dental care can be especially difficult for aging Iowans.

The mission of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition is to assure optimal oral health for aging Iowans.

Membership
The membership of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition is a collaboration of:

• Public and private health/oral care providers and organizations
• Hospitals and health care support services
• Government agencies
• Nonprofits and faith-based organizations
• Business and corporate entities
• Citizen groups, associations, and individuals
• Academic institutions

Strategic Initiative Committees

Education & Training
Develop and promote awareness, education, and training opportunities for oral health professionals, the direct care workforce, and those providing care and support for older adults

Coordination & Outreach
Provide outreach to the public and stakeholders about the importance of optimal oral health and support strategies that coordinate access to care

Program Policy & Reimbursement
Stay actively engaged in legislative and policy activities related to oral health and aging, and explore innovative payment models

Sustainability
Implement strategies for sustainability for membership, stakeholders, leadership, and coalition retention and growth

LifelongSmilesCoalition.com    LifelongSmilesCoalition@gmail.com    /LifelongSmilesCoalition
Coalition-Endorsed Grants
The coalition identified three grant projects to address the oral health needs of aging Iowans and submitted proposals to the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation for funding.

- Office of Education and Training at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry
- Mouth Care Matters — Iowa CareGivers
- I-Smile™ Silver project — Iowa Department of Public Health

Coalition Activities: Making an Impact

- Building awareness through conference exhibits and presentations
- Maintaining and sharing a story bank telling older Iowans’ stories
- Distributing information to retirees about the risk of losing dental benefits upon retirement
- Creating and sharing dental Medicaid benefits awareness document
- Promoting the importance of oral health online (social media and website)
- Informing elected officials and government agencies about policy impacts on oral health
- Addressing oral health’s role in overall health through addition of oral health questions on health risk behavior assessments
- Developing and delivering a competency-based oral health curriculum for the Direct Care Workforce

Iowa’s Aging Population
Individuals over age 65 are the fastest growing population group in Iowa. It is critical to keep their mouths healthy to enhance the quality of life. Older Iowans with healthy mouths maintain their independence longer, reduce overall health care costs, and can continue to be a vital part of the much needed and experienced workforce.

Population age 65 and over
Less than 20%
20% or more